

Bishop returns from sabbatical with thanks to all

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark
Thank you all very much.

There is no way that I can begin this column other than by expressing my gratitude to all of you who so generously supported my sabbatical program from beginning to end. I thank you for your prayers, and for your letters of bon voyage and welcome home. I thank you for the adjustments you made and for the extra work that you did. I am deeply grateful for all of this. Space does not permit me to mention by name all of those who gave the immediate and daily support that allowed me to take this time. But I do want very much to thank our vicars general, Bishop Dennis Hickey and Father John Mulligan, for all that they did in my absence. All who have any knowledge of the two of them will understand me when I tell you that I was completely relaxed knowing that they were willing to take over my daily duties.

I have a great deal that I want to share with you about the experience of these months, but I know that I will not be able to do that all at once. It's easy enough to tell you the things I did, because my life was quite regular and settled. The more difficult task is to share some of the prayer and

thinking that were so central to the enjoyment of those weeks.

Let me start by offering a summary report of the academic component and principal part of my sabbatical program — the study of the Spanish language. Next week I'll tell you about my two visits to our mission team in Tabasco.

I went to Cuernavaca in the State of Morelos, Mexico. I attended language school for a total of 13 weeks: for seven weeks beginning Oct. 2 and for six more weeks beginning Jan. 16.

We attended class from Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 1:30 p.m., with the customary break between sessions. For the first nine weeks, I was in class with two other students; for the last four, I had one-on-one instruction. No English was spoken in class, and very little was spoken during the breaks since we were encouraged to use nothing but Spanish.

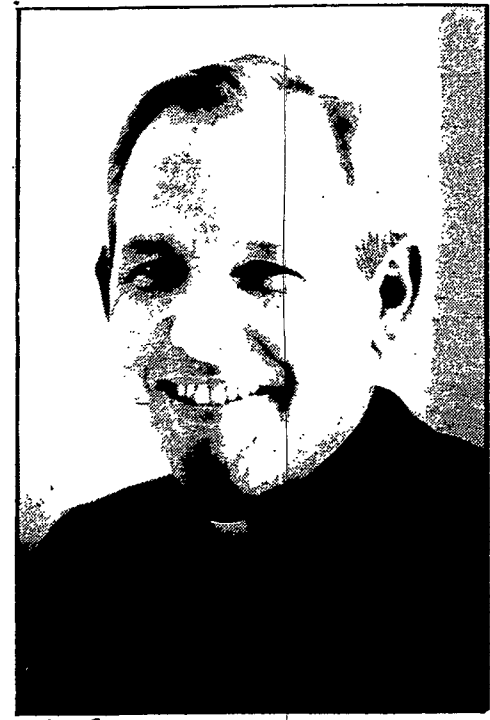
The same was true where I lived. My home — and it really was that — in Cuernavaca was with a community of six Daughters of the Holy Spirit, a Mexican religious congregation. Some knew a little English, but the language of the house is Spanish and Spanish we spoke. I continue

to marvel at the patience and kindness of those women, and I shall be forever grateful for their constant encouragement, especially on those days when I felt that my brain was turning to cement and my tongue to stone. Two meals and the celebration of the Eucharist with them each day extended opportunities for the study and practice of Spanish beyond the confines of the classroom. In addition, we had a homework assignment every night — usually a composition in which we were encouraged to use, as much as possible, the points of grammar we had studied that day.

Notwithstanding the frustration which I think is a natural part of the life of a student of any language (Does the level of frustration increase with age?), I enjoyed the work immensely and delighted in developing with sometimes painful slowness the ability to communicate simply in the Spanish language. I hope very much to maintain what ability I developed and for that purpose have been trying to spend some time studying each morning.

But more about that and other parts of my sabbatical next week.

I wish you a Blessed Easter and ...
Peace to all.



Along
The Way



Can schools be success without input?

To the editor:

Billboards around Rochester are claiming Catholic Schools to be a "Success Story." Do they mean that it's successful to hold hundreds of parents hostage by wielding all the power in decision making with no regard to parent input? Do they mean it's successful to reorganize and close schools that have been doing just fine with good student enrollments and excellent education? Do they mean it's successful to wipe out the concept of the "parish school" as we've known it for years? It's obvious to me that whoever designed these billboards about success stories must be as much in the dark as the rest of us parents.

We know that Catholic Schools have been great success stories up until now. Our children have received excellent edu-

cation in an atmosphere of love, understanding and respect. They've learned that it's not only important to learn your lessons, but also to mind your manners and respect the teacher, their classmates and the school itself. Their religion has not been taught strictly in religion classes but has been incorporated into their entire school day. Through support of our school, we have built a network of friendships; friends that hold the same ideals as my husband and I do — those of family, unity, love of one another and Faith in God.

I'm hoping that this success story doesn't have a sad ending. But with the "powers that be" continuing to make decisions about Catholic School reorganization without any parental input and without keeping the lines of communication open, we will have problems. Until the Diocese of Rochester shows me that Catholic Education truly is a priority, I don't think we'll live happily ever after.

Eileen D'Arienzo
St. Paul Boulevard
Rochester

Catholic schools form vocations

To the editor:

Does anyone out there remember where we used to get vocations from? From altar boys and children who went to Catholic schools and were taught by Nuns. Altar boys looked up to the Priest they served and girls looked up to the Nuns, who gave them good examples.

Now we don't have enough Priests and they say "Why not let women become Priests?" Well if our men don't have vocations to the Priesthood — neither do our women have vocations to be Nuns. So what makes us think they will have vocations to the Priesthood when the men don't? Will it

be for the glory? Of Who? God or Themselves? Will they have the same reasons for not wanting to be Priests as the men do? Will they want to be married? Will they want to be theologians so they can make their own rules even if they don't agree with church teachings, etc.?

Our bishop is for women being Priests, so that's probably why we have altar girls even though the Pope has said "No" to both. Why do we have altar girls — who can't become Priests. Altar boys can.

Dorothy Williams
Maplewood Avenue
Honeoye Falls

Disappointed in coverage of schools' week

To the editor:

As the "voice of the Diocese" I was disappointed that your issue of Feb. 2, 1989, during Catholic Schools Week, headlined with "Catholic schools await word on closing proposals." Catholic schools are alive, vibrant and providing an excellent education for young people.

It is sad that more press isn't given to the quality, exciting programs and to the positive self-esteem the children experience daily. There are marvelous experiences every day in our schools. During Catholic Schools' Week we show the community

and the Diocese our specialness, what it is that makes attending a Catholic school so worthwhile.

It would be wonderful to have the support of the Diocesan newspaper showing in printed word and photographs the life of Catholic schools.

I hope you will attempt to cover all sides of the story on Catholic education in the future.

Sharon R. Wheat
Holley Street
Brockport

Children will suffer from closings

To the editor:

From the parking lot of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, you can see a billboard. It reads, "Catholic Education: A Success Story."

How ironic that Father Miller, our pastor, just announced the closing of our parish school. Why? Lack of support and funds from our diocese.

There are many questions I have as a Catholic. What is happening to the U.S. Catholic Church? Why are so many churches closing? Why aren't there enough priests and nuns? Why are there so few young people in church.

Maybe the answer is the hierarchy does not care for our youth. Nurturing and loving children in the faith makes them faithful. This should be a daily experience.

Tuition to a Catholic school used to be free. All that was required was attendance at school and at Mass.

Urges diocesans to participate in Project Life

To the editor:

During this Lenten season, I implore all the folks in the Diocese of Rochester to pray for all the women and girls who are in a crisis situation and considering abortion. Pray that they can see beyond the panic and fear they feel and seek help from a good Christian agency that will give them the support they desperately need.

Also, please consider joining one of the many pro-life groups in the area. We, who pray at Highland Hospital every Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., would love you to join us in praying for the victims of abortion, mother and child, the doctors who perform them and the nurses who assist. It is only an hour out of an entire week and it is such a good witness.

Project Life is such a multi-faceted pro-life organization and can always use volunteers in many capacities.

If you can't give of your time, giving financially helps tremendously. We don't have the millions of dollars of support that Planned Parenthood has and it takes money to run pregnancy centers, shepherding homes and helping the women who need all kinds of support.

Please remember to pray for the children who will never experience life and their mothers who will never know that child she chose to abort.

Mary Ellen Frisch
Gillett Road
Spencerport

Catholic Courier Letters Policy

The *Catholic Courier* wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome all signed, original letters about current issues affecting church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the opinions of the letter writers.

We reserve the right to edit all letters. Mail them to: *Catholic Courier*, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, New York 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.



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